



Special National Congress

7–8 August 2026

We Educate
Together

Organise
We Advance

Together
We Transform



ADOPTED SADTU SPECIAL NATIONAL CONGRESS DECLARATION 7-8 AUGUST 2026 BIRCHWOOD HOTEL & CONFERENCE CENTRE, GAUTENG

Special Congress so declares: Mobilising the Consciousness and Uniting Revolutionary Professionals in Defence of Public Education, Working-Class Power and the National Democratic Revolution

Delegates representing the 287 000 members of the South African Democratic Teachers' Union convened for the Special National Congress from 7 to 8 August 2026 at the Birchwood Hotel and Conference Centre in Boksburg, Gauteng. The Special National Congress was convened in implementation of all previous congress and NGC resolutions, to take stock of fundamental socio-economic and political developments in the country.

The Special National Congress, attended by 1 252 delegates from across the length and breadth of our country, was convened under the 10th National Congress theme: *"Mobilising the consciousness and uniting revolutionary professionals in strengthening foundational learning and functional skills, to advance inclusive and sustainable economic growth in pursuance of a socialist society."* Our theme is a call to action to all education workers in particular, and to broader society, to prioritise quality education as a basic human right and a public good to be accessed by all.

This Special Congress is taking place during Women's Month, and we are reminded of what the famous Samora Machel once said: *"Women's emancipation is not an act of charity but a*

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precondition for the liberation of society.”

We, the delegates assembled at this Special National Congress, declare that SADTU enters a new phase of struggle, service and leadership. The political settlement produced by the May 2024 elections has ended the era of automatic majoritarian certainty and opened a more plural, negotiated and contested national order. This moment requires more than institutional adjustment. It demands a renewed progressive movement capable of defending the gains of the struggle, defending public education, strengthening democracy and mobilising society around the constitutional right of every child to learn and the labour rights of educators and education support personnel.

The Special National Congress of the South African Democratic Teachers’ Union (SADTU), meeting at a critical moment in the history of our country, our movement and our revolution, extends revolutionary greetings to all educators, workers, communities, progressive formations and the oppressed masses of our country.

Congress pays tribute to the generations of revolutionaries, workers, teachers, youth and community activists whose sacrifices secured the democratic breakthrough of 1994, and whose struggles continue to inspire the fight for a South Africa free from poverty, inequality, unemployment, patriarchy, racism and all forms of exploitation.

THE POLITICAL MOMENT

Congress met against the backdrop of a changing domestic and international balance of forces. The outcome of the May 2024 general elections marked a significant political turning point, ending the era of uncontested parliamentary majorities and ushering in a period characterised by coalition politics and a Government of National Unity.

Congress declares that SADTU will not respond to this moment with retreat, defensiveness or dependence on inherited influence. We will earn public authority through principled action,

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professional credibility, democratic organisation and measurable contribution to the quality and equality of public education.

DEFENCE AND ADVANCEMENT OF THE NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTION

Congress reaffirms the National Democratic Revolution as the strategic minimum programme for the transformation of South African society and the historic pathway towards a socialist future. Political freedom without economic emancipation remains incomplete. The major contradiction of our society remains the contradiction between capital and labour. The task before revolutionary forces is not retreat, but advance.

WORKING-CLASS UNITY ABOVE ALL

Congress unequivocally declares that the unity of workers, the unity of educators and the unity of SADTU are non-negotiable. Congress rejects factionalism, sectarianism, gatekeeping, coercion and intimidation. A binding Unity and Discipline Programme guarantees that no member shall be victimised, denied representation or excluded from participation because of political affiliation or electoral preference.

ALLIANCE, ELECTIONS AND THE WORKING-CLASS AGENDA

As delegates, we view education as a critical input towards the attainment of a National Democratic Society, one that we strongly believe can only be achieved through a coherent National Democratic Revolution towards socialism ultimately. We acknowledge that ours is a revolution that is, and will continue to be, spearheaded by the African National Congress-led Tripartite Alliance with the South African Communist Party (SACP), the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) and the South African National Civic Organisation (SANCO).

The Special National Congress was addressed by the Union's Student Chapter, which represents both the present vitality and future leadership of our Union.

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The Chapter emphasised several key principles that must guide the Union as we navigate the current moment in the Mass Democratic Movement and in broader society:

- Our unity is sacrosanct and must be defended at all times;
- Ideological consistency remains essential to our analysis, strategy and action; and
- The Union must continue to draw strength from its collective political clarity, organisational discipline and commitment to social transformation.

We recognise the historic role played by the left axis of the ANC-led Tripartite Alliance in shaping the strategic orientation of the broader liberation movement and safeguarding its sacrosanct unity.

Congress reaffirmed SADTU's historic commitment to the unity of the ANC-led Tripartite Alliance and adopted a resolution supporting and voting for the ANC in national and local government elections. Congress further resolved that SADTU shall continue promoting unity amongst all components of the Alliance and work towards a coherent approach to the 2026 Local Government Elections that strengthens, rather than weakens, working-class organisation and revolutionary unity.

Congress further declares its commitment to consolidating the power of the working-class vote, strengthening progressive forces, and advancing the struggle for a democratic, equal and socialist-oriented South Africa.

Congress further declares that the working-class vote must not be divided, diluted or demobilised, but must be organised, defended and consolidated to protect the gains of the struggle and safeguard the unfinished task of transformation.

PUBLIC EDUCATION AS A SITE OF REVOLUTIONARY STRUGGLE

The classroom is not merely a place of instruction. It is a site where the future of the nation is shaped, where consciousness is developed and where the struggle for human liberation

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acquires practical expression. SADTU shall intensify the struggle for quality public education, safe schools, dignified conditions of work, curriculum transformation and adequate funding for education.

SECTION 29 AND THE RIGHTS OF THE PEOPLE

Congress adopted the perspective that SADTU must increasingly assert itself as an education-centred force for the realisation of Section 29 of the Constitution. The defence of teacher rights and the advancement of learner rights are inseparable tasks of a revolutionary teachers' union. SADTU now declares its intention to act not only as a trade union defending the rights and conditions of educators and education support personnel, but also as a democratic, developmental and community-rooted labour-led force. We will organise around Section 29 of the Constitution and make the right to basic education a living reality in every classroom, school and community.

We therefore unite the struggle for educators' rights with the struggle for learners' rights. Properly supported teachers, safe and functional schools, protected learning time, credible administration, relevant curricula and active communities are not separate demands; together, they constitute the foundation of an equitable public education system.

THE UNCERTAINTY OF COALITION GOVERNANCE

The GNU, in its current counter-transformation form, requires a critical review by the movement. To an extent, some of our gains have been reversed. These include the glaringly lethargic manner in which the Minister of Basic Education is implementing the BELA Bill, a Bill that we fought for gallantly over a number of years because we believed, and still believe, that it can accelerate the transformation project of our education system and ensure access to quality, decolonised public education for our people.

It is our firm view that the Minister responsible for our sector can be classified as an accident of history that no education worker or learner should ever be exposed to again. The Land

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Expropriation Bill, which has been escalated to the level of the courts, and the National Health Insurance, which is also being challenged by a conglomerate of private healthcare providers and big pharma, are other examples of how the GNU, either by design or default, is reversing our gains.

Congress was deeply pained by the cynical manipulation of the poor and the working class by reactionary forces and right-wing formations, including the Democratic Alliance (DA), to oppose progressive measures aimed at addressing the historical land question. Such actions seek to defend the existing patterns of ownership inherited from colonialism and apartheid, delay meaningful land reform, and obstruct the revolutionary task of economic emancipation for the black majority.

POLITICAL EDUCATION AND REVOLUTIONARY RENEWAL

Congress adopted a National Political Education and Ideological Renewal Programme to deepen class consciousness, strengthen revolutionary theory and develop a new generation of revolutionary educators committed to public service, ethical leadership and social transformation.

THE STRUGGLE AGAINST CORRUPTION

Congress called for the acceleration of investigations and prosecutions against all those implicated in corruption, whether in the public or private sector; stronger protection of whistle-blowers; enhanced procurement transparency; and implementation of the recommendations arising from judicial commissions of inquiry.

THE TASKS AHEAD

Every branch must become a centre of mobilisation. Every region must become a centre of organisation. Every province must become a centre of implementation. Every member must become an organiser, educator and defender of public education.

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Congress declares its commitment to building fighting branches in the TVET sector to push back against undemocratic and anti-worker policies and management.

Congress further declares its commitment to defending the deferred wages of workers against capture by private interests and politicians. The constituted PIC Board lacks legitimacy until workers chosen by the unions are represented. Nothing about workers without workers.

CONCLUSION

We shall defend working-class unity. We shall defend public education. We shall defend the National Democratic Revolution. We shall deepen revolutionary professionalism. We shall organise, educate and mobilise.

The future will not be gifted to the working class. It must be organised, mobilised and won through struggle. An injury to one is an injury to all. The teachers of the nation, united with the workers and the poor, shall advance the revolution and shape the future.

Congress agrees with the former General Secretary of the SACP Charles Nqakula when he says: *“Left and working-class forces within the ANC-led Alliance must transform the present mood of confusion among the rank and file of the broad mass movement. Instead of feeding the sense of confusion with more complaints and moaning, with talk about breaking the Alliance, let us point the way forward. It is the historic responsibility of working-class formations to galvanise our National Liberation Movement.”*

FORWARD TO WORKING-CLASS UNITY!

FORWARD TO QUALITY PUBLIC EDUCATION!

FORWARD TO THE NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC REVOLUTION!

FORWARD TO SOCIALISM!

AMANDLA!

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